

Earth First!

Action Update

No.46 February 1998

30p

'War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight, the lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade' Percy Bysshe Shelley

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

INDIAN DAM VICTORY

A dramatic midnight announcement of capitulation by the state government of Madhya Pradesh has ended the protest occupation of the Maheshwar dam site in India. The site of this enormous hydropower project had been occupied by thousands of demonstrators since January 11th, and an indefinite fast was started on January 26th by area residents worried that their land and homes would be submerged and that environmental impacts on the region would be severe and irreversible. On the evening of January 30th, even as the news that the government had almost accepted the demands spread in the submergence area, thousands of people started pouring in to the occupation site. By midnight, and the time of the announcement, the crowd had swelled from 3,000 to over 8,000. The state government accepted all demands of the protesters, ordering the stoppage of work and a total review of the project, including land acquisition. A decision will be taken on the construction only after the report of a Task Force created to review this project has been obtained. The Task Force consists of representatives of the government of Madhya Pradesh, independent experts and representatives of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada). With this victory, work on the project has come to a grinding halt.

Protests against the Maheshwar dam project, one of 30 major, 135 medium-sized, and 3000 small dams planned for the whole Narmada Valley, have been going on for more than 10 years. In October, a rally of 10,000 was held in the area calling for work on the dam to stop. Neither the government nor project managers responded, hence this latest act of civil disobedience - the occupation of the valley by a village of tents called 'Sangharsh Gaon' - the Village of Struggle.

Meanwhile, protesters are keeping a close watch on how the foreign players will react to this government review - including equipment suppliers ABB, and Siemens and Bayerische Vereinsbank companies who are giving term loans to the project.

For more info contact the Bretton Woods Project, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT, Britain 0171 532 210 bwref@gn.apc.org

DEAD WOMAN'S BOTTOM TRASHED

The camps at Dead Woman's Bottom were evicted, setting a new precedent. The authorities used section 13 of a 1965 land rights act to evict the protesters. Apparently this legislation (currently being researched) relegates the protestors to the same status as the trees, meaning that they can be evicted with no notice, and that all their homes and tat can be destroyed. The police employed a swift and brutal strategy, catching everyone by surprise, arresting loads of people and immediately bailing them off site. Those remaining on site were given the option of cooperation to rescue their tat or face eviction and have their tat burned.

The police isolated the site with roadblocks to keep away ground support, legal observers and media. Therefore the removal of people from trees by diggers and an assault on an 80 year old man went unrecorded in the media blackout. The whole route was cleared in under 48 hours, despite all the defenses. The site has been levelled and the route secured with compounds.

This eviction procedure needs serious examination as does the allegation that the council sold the compulsory purchase order to ARC for £1. The extent of dangerous, illegal and generally dodgy activities needs to be challenged or else the whole protest camp tactics as we know it could be rendered futile.

Activity still continues down at the Mendip Hills, you can locate the 2 camps at OS co-ordinates, ST 716463 and ST 717461 between Nunney and Chantry Lane. Contact 017949 880 144 for more details and prisoners support on 01373 452 777.

GANDALF SOLIDARITY PLEDGE:

Please copy out the following and sign, include the name of your group/journal, phone, fax, e-mail, address, contact person or individuals name. Send pledges to LGSC c/o London Greenpeace, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP lgp@envirolink.org

"We call on all publications to fairly report the Gandalf case and the issues involved."

"We pledge our solidarity with the Gandalf defendants, and call for the 3 jailed editors of Green Anarchist to be freed and for the outstanding legal actions against the 2 remaining defendants to be abandoned."

"We pledge to throw our weight behind the campaign to support the independent and radical press, and to defend the freedom to report news of direct actions and protests."

"We pledge to report news of direct actions and protests whenever and however we see fit, and we will resist any attempts to censor journals or organisations which exercise such freedoms."

LET'S PIE!

Bill Gates, Microsoft magnate, received a cream pie in the face recently from a little known Belgian group whose slogan is "Let's pie! Let's pie! Nincompoop guys!". One of the group, who describes himself as "entarteur" (roughly translates as "encaker" or "pie-er"), had the following to say on the choice of Bill Gates, "in a way he is the master of the world, and then because he's offering his intelligence, his sharpened imagination and his power to the governments and to the world as it is today - that is to say gloomy, unjust and nauseating. He could have been a utopist, but he prefers being the lackey of the establishment. His power is effective and bigger than that of the leaders of the governments, who are only many-colored servants. So Bill Gates was at the top of our lists of victims. The attack against him is symbolic, it's against hierarchical power itself. Our war cry was explicit:

"Let's pie! Let's pie the polluting lolly!"

In a similar incident in the US, on 13th February Procter & Gamble CEO John E. Pepper had a pie thrown in his face at an awards ceremony. The pie-thrower, a supporter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), yelled, "Procter & Gamble poisons animals! Shame on you, John Pepper! Shame on you!"

"The purpose of the attack was simple", said a PETA spokesman, "This comes after years of writing letters and protesting outside of P&G offices against their animal tests," he said. "Sometimes a polite word doesn't do it. We wish it did. That's why we sometimes do unusual things, such as slinging tofu cream pies."

THE ACTION UPDATE NEEDS TO BE PASSED ON.

As you may know the publication changes group every year, and Manchester has had a fair shot at it now. If you are interested in taking it up, call us on (0161) 224 4846

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Dalton Insulators offer to pay the travelling expenses of anyone going to London on March 1st for the Countryside Rally to support the pro hunt lobby. Anyone wishing to take up the offer, contact Carol 01782 534321 x 2202.

The HOT guide booklet and HOT poster for the A SEED HOT SPRING '98 are ready for a massive distribution across Europe. To be a distribution point in your area contact the Action Update on 0161 224 4846.

Animal Rights Calendar online at <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/arc/veggies/> or by email in .TXT or .PM5 format. Animals Contacts Directory online at <http://www.innotts.co.uk/~rainbow/veggies/acdirect.htm>.

Corporate Watch is after info/research on the Housebuilder's Federation to assist campaigning on housing development on agricultural/greenbelt land. Contact 01865 791391 or mail@corporatwatch.i-way.co.uk

On 18th/19th January Swedish activists connected to Action for Social Ecology (SEA) temporarily stopped the construction of the Stockholm Southern Link road through sabotage: four road building machines were badly damaged.

A new mailing list has been set up to support video makers working in the domain of human rights, environmentalism and community video etc. To subscribe contact lostit@gifford.co.uk or pager/voicemail 0941 170945

Focus on the Corporation is a weekly column which reports and comments critically on corporate actions, plans, abuses and trends. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to listproc@essential.org with the following all in one line: subscribe corp-focus <your name>

The next European Summit will be held in Cardiff from June 14th to 16th. Reclaim Europe! is an umbrella organisation for the co-ordination of environmental, human and animal liberation campaigns and events during the summit. It will also provide travel and free/cheap accommodation. Contact europ@astra.global.net.uk or see contacts list for address.

2-3000 people turned up to encircle the Ministry of "Defence" against the bombing of Iraq and about 500 people took over Whitehall for a couple of hours. Nine arrests were made. On Monday 16th a blockade took place at the north London Joint Rapid Deployment Force HQ, where troops are preparing for possible conflict.

An effigy of Judge Selwood, the man who sentenced three editors of Green Anarchist (GA) to jail recently, was burnt outside Portsmouth Crown Court. The judge was setting a court date for two more people involved trial (end of April). See Prisoners for more info.

Join the mass phone-ins to Tony Blair each day 1-2pm, to remind him not everyone has fallen for the hypocrisy of the Iraqi war. Ring Downing St on 0171-270-3000.

Manchester EF! has opened a Squatt cafe/ info centre. Activists are still fighting over the name. Should it be 'The Crow Bar', 'Fresh Ground', or the 'OK.asional Cafe'? Contact (0161) 224 4846

AIRE VALLEY

Radical action is getting a little less radical now that 'normal' residents are taking up direct action to stop a luxury housing development in their village. A retired policeman, accountants, housewives and managers are all using section 6 squat law to live in caravans and block the bulldozers from starting work on 92 Bryant homes at Aspen Rise, Sandy Lane, Bradford. Locals took advice from residents of the Rye Loaf Camp at the Bingley Bypass protest, after their letters, petitions and public meetings were ignored with disdain by local councillors. Contractors have started to construct a site fence, although this has not stopped mass torchlight trespasses whilst timid security look on. The protest is one of several green and brown belt development hot-spots springing up in the Aire Valley. Any activists wishing to help out should call in at the Rye Loaf Camp on the Bingley Anti Road protest site and ask for Oliver. Leave messages at 01274 504 626 - ask for Ben.

NUCLEAR TRANSPORT: IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

To date there have been three transports of high level nuclear waste going to Gorleben in northern Germany. Resistance in this area has taken place over the last 20 years with its highlight last March when 30 000 police were needed to "protect" the waste against the will of not only the 15 000 protesters but of the majority of the population. It was the biggest police operation in the history of the federal republic. German law now says that nuclear power plants only get permission to run if they can guarantee that the waste is going to be looked after, which means bringing it either to Sellafield or La Hague or storing it in the shelter in Gorleben or Ahaus. Shipments to Sellafield and La Hague return to Germany after a couple of years and Gorleben is getting too expensive, so the only possibility left is to bring the waste to Ahaus, hoping that there is not going to be such a powerful resistance as in Gorleben.

Police have already announced that they are not going to be able to staff football games in the second half of March as they will have at least 20 000 police in Ahaus. The Castor is leaving from Neckarwestheim and Gundremmingen (Donau) in the week of March 23rd. After that it will go north to Ahaus by train. There is a train track of 4km leading from the main station in Ahaus to the "storing shelter" but police have plans of having a 500m 'demonstration-free' belt either side of the track and of closing the whole town to everybody except for inhabitants. There will be a huge demonstration in Muenster on the 21st of March. After that people will move to the seven camps around Ahaus. Contact BI "Kein Atommuell in Ahaus", Bahnhofstr.51, 48683 Ahaus, 02561/961791, fax 961792, info hotline 961799

STRANGE FRUIT!

It has recently been revealed that between Christmas and New Year a genetic test site at Broomfield Agricultural college, connected to the University of Derby, was trashed. Apple trees on the site were being genetically manipulated for disease and insect resistance.

For pictures and articles of similar actions that have happened recently in both the UK and Ireland check out the Super Heroes Against Genetics (SHAG) website: <http://www.envirolink.org/orgs/shag/x-files.html>

NO FUR - OR CLOTHES!

A naked protest in freezing weather was the latest high profile action at Cornyhaugh Mink Farm, Kirkley Mill, Ponteland. Six anti-fur protestors were bombarded by photographers from all over as they arrived clad only in a banner carrying the message 'We'd rather go naked than wear fur'.

The campaign against this particular farm began in July 97 when fur activists carried out an undercover inspection. Footage of mink kept in such appalling conditions that they were driven to viciously attacking one another, was exposed on local TV and newspapers. Since then a small team has sustained an intensive campaign aimed at closing the farm down - demos have included picnics, grim reaper street theatre and tree decoration. Contact Cornyhaugh Fur Campaign, PO Box 1JY, Newcastle-upon-Thames, NE99 1JY

500 PROTESTORS AT HILLGROVE FARM

On 18th January massive numbers turned out for a demo at Hillgrove Farm in Oxon, where approximately 1000 cats are bred for use in vivisection laboratories. Much of the support came from an increasing number of local people committed to seeing Hillgrove close down. Police tactics were heavy-handed as the Thames Valley police swamped the area with roughly one officer for every three demonstrators. Having made their presence felt at the farm they moved off in a procession towards Witney, the local town. About fifty people broke off and went to the home of a Hillgrove worker, to find that members of the police's Tactical Support Group had already hidden inside to run out and attack demonstrators as they arrived, picking out and arresting several.

A daily picket continues outside the farm whilst another demo is planned for 22nd February. Contact 0121 632 6460.

DOCKERS FINAL SETTLEMENT

After 2 years and 4 months the Liverpool Dockers have ended their fight to get re-instated. Shop stewards spent the month before the final settlement debating the direction of the dispute. Their conclusions were that in certain key areas the campaign had started to falter and that in order not to see good men and women lose everything or risk a collapse from within a collective agreement on the best possible terms had to be accepted. The fact that the Labour government and the TGWU supported the line of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company was a blow to the striking dockers. They also referred to the, "hard line tactics of the police on the picket lines," as a factor in the decision to bring the struggle to a conclusion. The terms of the settlement were based on up to £28,000 redundancy payment for all ex Mersey Docks men. Approximately 80 dockers are excluded from this, also the limited redundancy payments being made to approximately 2/3 of the sacked dockers will be subject not only to debt repayment but may be reclaimed by the benefits office. "It is with a great sadness in our hearts that we write to all our magnificent supporters and express our deepest gratitude. We have to build upon our internationalism, upon the experiences of all our struggles. Let the words of a great Irish trade unionist capture our thoughts; 'Who is it speaks of defeat? I tell you a cause like ours is greater than defeat can know. It is the power of powers' James Larkin".

How to Contact the Earth First! Action Update

Post: Earth First! Action Update, Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. Enclose SAE for replies. Telephone: 0161 224 4846.

E-mail: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Send us your details if you want to subscribe to the free e-mail server.

Earth First! Website address: <http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/ef/earthfirst.html>

HOT SPRING 98

In the first six months of 1998 the national, regional and international processes will see a wave of conferences, meetings, summits and back room hand shakes, aiming at consolidating the economic and political power of a handful of transnational corporations.

Hot Spring is an initiative aimed at uniting people's action against corporate rule and laying down a challenge to corporate led governments and transnational corporations.

The forces of globalisation and 'free' trade are growing and determining our lives more and more. They are in our food, in our homes, in our education, in our government. It is the result of actions of a number of entities that all work in one direction: the creation of a completely liberalised world market, into which every corner of the world is integrated. These entities are a distinct group of 'world leaders' of industrialised northern countries, an army of uncontrollable bureaucrats in institutions such as the European Union, the World Bank, IMF and WTO; top managers of transnational corporations, all aided by PR firms, 'scientific' think tanks and obedient media to spread their news.

Below is an overview some up-coming meetings, contacts are coordination points for actions:

1. EUROPEAN UNION (GREAT BRITAIN PRESIDENCY)

Great Britain will hold the presidency of the EU. Informal and formal meetings of ministers and heads of state are planned throughout the year. It will mainly be a push for the Single Market, the European Monetary Union and the expansion of the Union towards the East.

- * Agenda 2000 Meeting (EU expansion) - London February 25
- * Trade Negotiations EU-Mexico - UK March 1
- * Negotiations new EU members s - UK March 31
- * EU Heads of State Summit - Cardiff June 14-16

Contact Reclaim Europe! (see contacts)

2. WTO (WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION)

In May the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the WTO will take place in Geneva. It coincides with the 50th anniversary of the GATT. The WTO will take further steps to deepen the liberalisation of trade in all sectors and secure Intellectual Property Rights for TNCs.

This February, the Peoples Global Action against 'Free' Trade and the WTO will have its first conference in Geneva, where it will launch a world-wide coordination of resistance against the WTO, uniting activists from the North and South.

- * PGA meeting - Geneva February 23-25
- * WTO Meeting - Geneva May 18-20

Contact People's Global Action, PFE! (Germany) +49-241 80 37 92

3. MAI (MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENTS)

Once a month in the period January-April, the OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development-consisting of the 29 most 'developed' countries in the world) will meet to try to come to an agreement on the MAI. The MAI, should it be signed in its current form, will MAI will put an end to the last remaining obstacles for large multinationals to invest in any country, in order to maximise their profit, on the basis of bad labour conditions, lack of environmental regulation, destruction of local economies and lack of democracy.

- * MAI Negotiating Meeting - Paris, March 16-17, April 14-17 *
- Planned Signing of MAI - Paris April 18

Contact Corporate Watch (see contacts)

4. WEF (WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM)

The WEF is a group of 1000 (!) of the world's most influential heads of state and top managers of the biggest multinationals. They meet once a year in the Swiss Alps

- * WEF Meeting - Davos (CH) Over. Actions have happened in 54 countries.

5. IMF (INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND) & WORLD BANK

These two institutions are crucial in the globalisation process. Through their Structural Adjustment Programmes, imposed on all countries that seek credit from them, they force countries to liberalise their economies and open the door for foreign investment. The Spring meeting will, among other things, seek further funds for the IMF to deal with crises such as now happening in Southeast Asia.

- * IMF/Worldbank Spring Meeting - Washington April 17-19

Contact Roberta Cowan, FOE Int. +31-20-622 1369

6. LIFE PATENT DIRECTIVE

The Directive would legitimise corporate raiding of the biodiversity and indigenous knowledge of Southern peoples, promote the genetic

manipulation of animals and plants and the ultimate piece in the jigsaw of corporate control over humans around the globe. The industry has been successful until now in the European Parliament.

- * Life Patent Directive Final Vote - European Parliament, Brussels April

Contact the Genetic Engineering Network (see contacts)

7. EBRD (EUROPEAN BANK ON RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT)

In May, the EBRD will have its annual Meeting in the Ukraine. The EBRD was set up by the West to finance the transition of Eastern Europe to a market based economy. It finances infrastructure projects as well as investments from the private sector. The EBRD is heavily involved in the supporting the nuclear sector, the massive expansion of road schemes etc.

- * EBRD Annual General Meeting - Kiev Ukraine May 8-12

Contact For The Earth (Bulgaria) +359 2 658216 ftearth@bulnet.bg

8. G8 (USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy & Russia)

The G8 are the eight largest industrialised nations in the world. They meet once a year to stem their policies towards the common goal of a 'free' world market. These discussion are usually joined by the presidents of the World Bank, WTO, IMF and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

- * G8 Annual Meeting - Birmingham May 15-17
- Contact Radical Routes (0121) 551 1132

9. EUROSATORY

Eurosatory is an international annual arms trade fair which promotes the arms trade.

- * Eurosatory ArmsFair - Paris June 1-3

Contact: Eco-Action EF! France (see contacts)

A SEED Europe, Corporate Europe Observatory, Corporate Watch, Earth First!, Environmental

Rights Action (ERA-Nigeria), EuroDusnie, European Youth For Action, For The Earth, Radical Routes, Rainbow Keepers, Reclaim Europe!, Reclaim the Streets, Sustainable Europe Tour, The Anti-Maastricht Alliance, and many more groups have decided to join forces.

Hot Spring is a tool for uniting and celebrating the efforts of movements, organisations and individuals who seek to break the processes and mechanisms of economic globalisation through solidarity, education, demonstration and direct action.

There will be a gathering on the 21-22 of March in Birmingham to get your head round 'globalisation' and everything mentioned above. It will help coordinating actions against the G8 and the EU Summit. Contact Jo on (0161) 224 4846 jo@avocados.globalnet.co.uk

A 32-page booklet with all the necessary information about HOT SPRING 98' and how to help doing actions and spreading information can be ordered from the Action Update

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!

We can't tell you if you don't tell us. Send your news, stories, prisoners addresses, quotes, leaflets and up coming dates on the the back of an envelope, A4 sheet, computer disk or email to EF!AU. Don't forget pictures, (as photos or graphics files,) or drawings.

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82 Colston St
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Copper Hill
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Box E, 12 Mill Road,
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Reclaim the Valleys
c/o Swansea Environment
Collective, Pier Street
Swansea, SA1 1RY

Save Lyminge Forest
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nadia@gluk.apc.org

Rainforest Information
Center POB 368
Lismore NSW 2480
Australia
066 21 85 05

Slovakia EF!
A. Hlinka 11
96001 Zvolen, Slovakia
kolenka@uvt.tuzvo.sk

Volunteers For Earth
Defence
189 San Antonio Ext
SFDM
1105 Quezon City Philip-
pines

OTHER CONTACTS

Advisory Service for
Squatters 2, St Pauls Road
London N1 2QN
0171 359 8814

ALF Supporters Group
BCM Box 1160
London WC1N 3XX

Anarchist Black Cross
c/o 121 Raiton Rd
London, SE24 0LR

Anarchist-Primitivist
Network PO Box 252
Rickmansworth, Herts
WD3 3AY

Anti-Fascist Action
BM Box 1734
London WC1N 3XX
0161 232 0813

Birmingham Northern
Relief Road Campaign
Greenwood Protest Site
adj. to ARC Quarry
London Road
Canwell nr Sutton
Coldfield W.Midlands
0797 0301978

Campaign Legal Group
43 Swan Meadow Rd.
Poolstock
Wigan WN3 5BJ
01942 513792
clg@onnlinac.wim-uk.net

Conscious Cinema
PO BOX 2679
Brighton BN2 2EF
01273 278018

Contraflow
56A Info Shop
56 Crompton St
London, SE17
Fax: 0171 326 0353

Counter Information
c/o Transmission
28 King St
Glasgow, G1 5QP

Earth Circus Network
c/o P.O. Box 2679
Brighton BN2 2DN
00378 636254

EarthRights
Battlebridge Centre
Battlebridge Rd
London NW1 2TL
0171 278 1005
earthrights@gn.apc.org

Envionmental
Ploughshares
Dept 126
1 Newton St.
Manchester M1 1HW

Freedom Network
PO BOX 9384 London.
SW9 7ZB 0171 793 7343

Genetic Engineering
Network
PO Box 9656
London N4 4JY
0181 374 9516

Green Anarchist Network
BCM 1715
London WC1N 3XX

Hunt Saboteurs Assoc.
PO BOX 2786
Brighton BN2 2AX
01273 622827
hsa@gn.apc.org
<http://envirolink.org/arrs/HSA/hsa.html>

Friends of MOVE
P.O.Box 14129
London W12 8GR

Justice?/Schnews
PO Box 2600
Brighton
E. Sussex BN2 2DX
01273 685913
<http://www.cbuzz.co.uk/SchNEWS/index.html>

Legal Defence &
Monitoring Group
BM Haven
London, WC1N 3XX
0181 5337116

McLibel Support
Campaign
5 Caledonian Rd
London N1 9DX
0171 713 1269
info@mcspotlight.org

Menwith Womens Peace
Camp A59 Lay-By
Nr. Menwith Hill Spybase
Nr. Harrogate, N.Yorks
01943 468593

Reclaim Europe!
115a Jerningham Road
London SE14 5NH
0171 639 3154
europ@globalnet.co.uk

Save the Hillgrove Cats
BoxCB 111 Magdalen Rd
Oxford

Squall
PO-Box 8959
London N12 5HW
0171 561 1204
Fax: 0171 272 9243

STROPP(Stop the Road on
Peaks Parnham)
P.O.Box 162
Grimsby
01472 278845

Third Battle of Newbury
PO BOX 5520
Newbury, RG14 7YW
01635 45544
<http://www.gn.apc.org/newbury/>

The Land is Ours
Box E
111 Magdalen Road
Oxford OX4 1RQ
01865 722016

Trident Ploughshares2000
42-6 Bethel St
Norwich
Norfolk NR2 1NR

UK Subs Dept 125
1 Newton St
Manchester M1 1HW

WHAT IS EARTH FIRST!?

Earth First! is not a cohesive group or a campaign but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under. The general principles behind the name are non-hierarchical organisation and the use of direct action to confront, stop, and eventually reverse the forces that are responsible for the destruction of the Earth and it's inhabitants. The above contacts are autonomous groups that consider themselves to share these principles. International contacts are entry points into that country's own network of groups. Other contacts are ones whose aims and principles are ones that we agree with fully or in part, or groups that we think may be of use or interest to people.

New additions or alterations are shown in bold.

FRENCH FARMERS DESTROY GE MAIZE

On January 8th, about 100 farmers from the 2nd largest French farmers union, Confederation Paysanne (CP), attacked a Novartis conditioning and storage plant. After looking around they found 5 tons of transgenic maize which they mixed with non-modified maize before humidifying it - rendering it useless. Shortly afterwards 3 of their representatives were arrested and put on trial on the 3rd of February. Novartis is claiming 1 million US Dollars in damages (they allege that the five tons of seeds destroyed was the sum total of seed kept in cold storage). This sum was probably underestimated so as to turn it into a political trial. Coinciding with its start, a coalition of consumers, farmers and environmental groups launched a campaign to reverse the French governments decision to allow the cultivation of the genetically altered maize. The weekend before the trial, opponents of GE staged protests at two Novartis sites in northern and central France. The court was packed for the trial, with many distinguished witnesses and around a thousand people gathered outside. Sentencing is due around the 18th of this month and it looks as if the three will receive a suspended sentence. France is the first country in the European Union to allow the growing of GE maize. The French government has not yet cleared the production or the marketing of other gene-modified crops like rape seed oil and sugar beet pending further studies and the start of a public debate. Contact GEN for more GE info.

WATER MEADOWS OCCUPATION

The occupation of the threatened Bury St Edmunds Water Meadow in Suffolk continues despite gales, floods and cold winter weather. The camp was set up in opposition to plans by the Greene King brewery to build a road through the area. The road has been approved in spite of a local plan which clearly states that there should be no roads or further development on the Meadows.

The campaigners' latest tactic is to take resistance beyond the site and hit Greene King in the pocket with a boycott of their products. There will also be pickets outside local pubs to inform drinkers of the reasoning behind this latest tactic.

At the end of January the brewery responded to opposition to their development plans by demolishing an old derelict bridge which links the camp with its treehouses. Later in the same day two scab climbers went up to a tree house but unexpectedly found it occupied by a protestor bearing a Section 6 Notice. They said nothing and withdrew. Finally, Greene King sent a lorry of rubble to tip in the only entrance to the field and, despite advice from the police, blocked the entrance. An informal get together takes place at the meadow at 3pm each Sunday. To offer support (camp residents needed) contact 01359 240365 or 01284 760835.

GOLF ACTION

Oldham Earth First! took over the garden of councillor John Battye on the 16th of February. They set up a camp, put banners up and played golf with children's clubs. The action took place in response to Oldham council's plans to use Beal Valley partly as a golf course and partly as a dumping ground for industrial waste, including arsenic, cyanide, low level radiation, and the spoil from the M66. Local protesters demanded that the land become a nature reserve as it hosted newts, birds and a wide range of mammals. More actions are planned, as from next month the area is going to see 100 lorries a day carrying waste to the site. Contact 0161 628 5128.

GANDALF UPDATE

Over 50 people took part in the first of a series of monthly Gandalf support group meetings in London on 28th January. The jailing of 3 radical journalists for 3 years each, for reporting news of environmental and animal rights direct actions and pretexts, has provoked a considerable response...

Thousands are being asked to sign a Solidarity Pledge (see front page) to back the continued reporting of direct actions in defiance of the jailings. # An appeal is being circulated for witnesses to come forward for the defence - contact the defendants solicitor: Des Murphy 01273 602111. # The appeal by Noel Molland, Saxon Wood and Steve Booth against their convictions is likely to be heard in July. # People should have Gandalf literature on stalls and/or organise stalls specifically for Gandalf. # Liberty has produced a general briefing, "Conspiracy, Incitement and the Gandalf Trial", explaining the case and calling for the abolition of the offence of 'conspiracy to incite.' # Concern has been raised amongst journalists and press photographers over the police/state harassment of the press. # The prisoners want to apply to Amnesty for recognition as prisoners of conscience.

The other two Gandalf defendants Paul Rodgers and Robin Webb, are still to be tried. Paul's counsel has argued that his client should be tried separately to Robin - this will be debated further on the 6th March. Robin's trial, with or without Paul, will begin on 27th April.

DUTCH MAI ACTION

On 12th February Dutch activists occupied the entrance of MAI chief negotiator Engering's office, in the Ministry of Economic Affairs in The Hague, The Netherlands. Forty people from the Dutch anti-MAI action group "MAI nietgezien" (= MAI not seen/MAI not for me) went inside the Ministry to protest against the MAI and to demand that the negotiations be extended for at least a year. After an hour the activists met with Mr. Engering and a negotiator for The Netherlands, Marinus Sikkels, and suggested that trying to finish an agreement by the end of April is undemocratic and fraught with problems. Activists also demanded a more open and accessible negotiation procedure, with full information available and public participation. Engering answered that such decisions could only be taken by the governments and would not promise to even attempt to postpone the deadline for the negotiations. Contact Corporatetwatch on 01865 791391.

MAI POLL DISASTER

MAI negotiations are in trouble again. None of the countries involved really wants to let itself get overrun by foreign investors, (except perhaps the UK,) and so the list of exemptions and exceptions to MAI rules has grown to unmanageable proportions. Negotiations have been rescheduled so that the document will be provisionally signed on the 27th April (back from the 18th). This will be a statement of agreement with the broad aims of the MAI and a commitment to resolve national differences. The date for finalising the agreement has been put back to November.

Corporate Watch is advocating an unofficial national referendum on the MAI. It involves a very simple action that was tried out by the Oxford MAI group on 24th January.

Campaigners set up their own polling stations at two points in the city centre to try and canvas general opinion on the MAI. These polling stations featured banners displaying the messages "Don't let big business trash democracy" and "Vote today

EVENTS

FEBRUARY

- 21 West Country gathering. Day of workshops and planning. Contact 01225 312688 or for lift-sharing and accommodation 01225 466526
- 22 Demonstration at Hillgrove Farm cat breeders, 12am on Dry Lane, Witney, Oxon
- 23 - 25 Peoples' Global Action against "Free" Trade and the WTO (PGA) gathering in Geneva. Contact Play Fair Europe! +49 241 80 37 92
- 24 Demonstration at the Waterloo Cup, biggest hare coursing event of the year. Meet at 11am at the Causeway, off the A565, nr Fromby. Contact 0151 726 0339
- 28 Rally Against MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment), Reading, Berkshire. Contact 0118 958 6692 / 0118 960 3417
- 27 - 1 Green Student Network Gathering, Leeds University Students' Union, £10 (free for students from Scotland & N.Ireland). Contact 0113 231 4226
- 28 'Food for Thought, Land for Living' - Bristol Green Party Green Futures conference, Friends Meeting House, Bristol. Contact Bristol Green Party on 0117 9246894
- 28 - 1 'Action for Sustainability '98, Maynooth, Co Kildare, Eire. Speakers to include Vandana Shiva. Contact Low Impact at 01-7083669

MARCH

- 7 - 8 Zapatista Challenge Conference, a call to confront neoliberalism and support the continuing struggle of the Mexican Zapatista. Praxis Centre, Port St, London E2 (Bethnal Green Tube station). Contact 0114 2765675, or Mexico Support Group 0181 682 2402.
- 7 Critical Mass bike ride, Bury St Edmunds 12 noon, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds
- 14 Siemens action, Oldham, in protest at the company's policy to sell nuclear reactors to Eastern Europe even though they're not safe enough for their home country (Germany). Contact Oldham EF! 0161 628 5128
- 14 Birmingham City Centre Cycle Rally. Mass ride of the Birmingham ringway in support Birmingham Northern Relief Road Campaign. Meet Chamberlain Square, city centre 12am. Bring music, whistles, air horns.
- 14 National Fur Demo, NW Devon. Contact ARCNEWS 01902 711935
- 21 Carnival procession celebrating peaceful co-existence between people's and the land triumphing over exploitation. 1pm, St Sampson's Square, York. Organised to coincide with finance ministers from 15 countries meeting in York to discuss monetary union, MAI and stuff.
- 14 - 15 Hot Spring UK (aka. Counter Globalisation Network gathering). Learning about and planning around G8 summit, World Trade Organisation, Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Contact 0161 224 4846
- 21-22 Youth CND Gathering. Info on 0171 6073616
- 23 Castor nuclear transport begins, Ahaus (Germany). Contact 00 31 (0)46 4524803
- 26 Anniversary Day of Action on Huntingdon Life Science laboratories. Meet 12 midday at gates of Huntingdon Research Centre, Cambridge. Contact 0589 026435
- 28 - 29 The Big Bleder. Gathering in Scotland, Birkinhill House, Lanarkshire. ML11 0NJ about direct action, environmental issues. 01555 820555
- 28 - 29 Mass Trespass in commemoration of the Diggers movement. Meet at 1pm Luton Railway Station by the taxi ranks. Contact 01865 722016 or 0402 176410

APRIL

- 1 The first ever Diggers' Day commemoration - on the day the Digger colony began a group will be going to St George's Hill to commemorate the 349th anniversary of Winstanley's settlement
- 3 - 5 Gathering Visions, Gathering Strength II, Manchester University. A weekend gathering to bring together direct activists from different movements and generations to explore social change and how we can do it! Contact 0161 834 8301
- 9-16 International Animal Rights Gathering, Holland. Contact in UK 01424430503, in Holland 00 (31) 20 6864275
- 10-11 Love and Rockets Action. 12 noon, Bristol Bus Station Car Park. Workshops on 'the social city' and excellent action (to be announced). Accommodation provided. Contact Bristol EF!
- 18 Bike ride action in Oldham. Meet at Mumps railway station. Contact Oldham EF! 0161 628 5128
- 25 Reclaim the Streets at the A33 camp in Germany. Contact 49 5425 270
- 25/26 Hammers and Spanners: a Ploughshares approach to environmental action, Oxford. Contact 0161 226 2996

to save your vote"; a table with several briefings by WDM; and a couple of articles from the alternative press about the MAI. There was also a ballot box, voting slips, leaflets and a three-sided screen to create a 'polling booth'. The voting slips offered two choices "I am opposed to the Multilateral Agreement on Investments" and "I am in favour of the Multilateral Agreement on Investments".

One of the polling stations netted a massive 80 votes - 77 opposed to the MAI and 3 in favour, giving the multilateral vote a disappointing 3.75% of the electorate. This hard core of "free traders" collapsed at the second site where only 3 of 175 votes (1.7%) were found to support the MAI. Electoral commentators (and polling officers) were shocked by plummeting support for the OECD's plan. With 97.6% of voters against them the democratic mandate for the Multilateral Agreement on Investment looks shakier than ever. Not that Whitehall or the DTI has ever bothered to ask the people in the first place.

Hundreds more declined to vote but went away informed with a determination to learn more. Send details of your own polling actions - when, where, & voting statistics - to Corporate Watch. Contact 01865 791391 mail@corporatewatch.i-way.co.uk

VICTORY AFTER 132 DAY TREE SIT!

On 12th February an American EF!er finally came down from a 16-foot wide, 2000 year old redwood tree which she had occupied for a record 132 days! A group had originally set up home in the tree last December in defiance of the Pacific Lumber Company's plans to cut the ancient tree, known as Luna, or the Stafford Giant.

The loggers attempted various methods to remove the determined EF!ers - cutting in high winds resulted in a large tree striking the redwood last December, while in January Pacific Lumber surrounded the tree with security, flood lights and ropes, vowing to starve out the occupants. Food deprivation was complemented by sleep deprivation as the timber company blasted fog horns as a deliberate disturbance. Further intimidation came in the form of helicopter assaults in which the tree sitters, perched 160 foot high, were shaken by massive updrafts created by the large twin blades of the logging helicopter flying within 30 feet of the platform.

The Pacific Lumber Co. has finally given up its bullying tactics and responded to the concern of the tree's residents and of residents in the local community who have stood firm. In the face of courageous resistance Pacific Lumber pulled out.

SAVED BY SPIKING?

After over two years of protest, it looks like Pressmennan woods has had a reprieve. Landowner John Kinnaird has in the past stated his wish to 'manage' the woodland by thinning it - for BMW dashboards... Recently the woodland management consultants working for Mr Kinnaird said, "The oaks have been put on the backburner. We don't want to have to fight a running battle with protestors to manage the wood. Nothing is going to happen in the near future." This change of heart is directly attributable to the direct and legal action that has taken place. There are reports in the Scottish press that tree spiking has had a hand in the decision. The camps were a great idea, one for the woodland awareness, the other reclaiming common land, both ended in disaster after increasing torment; consequently, neither of the site were available for use when we really needed them. It was difficult to deal with dodgy characters who distracted and diverted the campaign. Post-camp, and after much deliberation it was decided by some that perhaps the least damaging and most certain method of defence was by devaluing the timber. Ceramics are undetectable and break expensive sawmill blades.

A number of trees were carefully spiked, clear warnings were also marked throughout the wood. For further info contact 01368 850630.

EF! CORPORATE TEA PARTY.

South Downs EF!ers targeted one of the world's biggest multinationals and visited Mark Moody-Stuart, a managing director of Shell, at his home in Sussex. The activists occupied the roof decorating it with banners reading "Murderers" and "Earth First!". Surprisingly they were hosted by the director's wife who served everyone tea - how pleasant.

The action was highlighting the Davos meeting in Switzerland of a 1000 corporations who were cementing their plans to maximise their global power and profit, particularly through the new MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) initiative.

Simultaneous actions took place around the globe in Colombia, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, South Korea, Spain and the USA. Nearly 200 organisations from 54 countries, with a combined membership of 20 million, have released the Declaration against the Globalisers of Misery, which rejects the destructive nature of globalised corporate power and practises.

PS: Eviction imminent at
Lyminge Forest

Contact 01303 265737

SPY NETWORK

A global electronic spy network that can eavesdrop on every telephone, email and telex communication around the world has been officially acknowledged in a recent European Commission report, 'Assessing the Technologies of Political Control'. The report contains details of a network of American-controlled spy stations on British soil, including Menwith Hill, that "routinely and indiscriminately" monitors countless phone, fax and email messages. It confirms that the citizens of Britain and other European states are subject to an intensity of surveillance far in excess of that imagined by most parliaments.

For more than a decade former agents of US, British, Canadian and New Zealand national security agencies have claimed that the monitoring of electronic communications has become endemic throughout the world. Rumours have circulated that new technologies have been developed which have the capability to search most of the world's telex, fax and email networks for "keywords". You have been warned.

PRISONERS

John and Ian got found guilty of criminal damage and public disorder and got sentenced to 12 months for each offence. Having spent already four months on remand they still have a few months to go through. Letters and visits welcome.

Write to

John Davies (CH4539)
Ian Williamson (CH 5067) at HMP
Altercourse, Higher Lane, Fazackerly,
Liverpool, L9 7LH

The Gandalf 3 are in prison for reporting direct action

Saxon Wood (CK4322), HMP
Winchester, SO22
Steve Booth (CK4323), HMP Preston,
2 Ribbleson Lane, Preston, PR1 5AB
Noel Molland (CK4321), HMP Guys
Marsh, Shaftsbury, Dorset SP7 0AH

11 years for carrying out arson attacks on meat lorries, incitement and escaping from police custody during animal liberation activities. Keith Mann (EE3588), HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ

SUBSCRIBE TO THE EF! ACTION UPDATE

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Address _____

Subscriptions cost a minimum contribution of £5 (£6 International subscriptions) for the next twelve issues. Send more if you can afford it to keep the Action Update going and to enable us to reply to enquiries and give free subscriptions to prisoners, libraries, community groups etc.. Make cheques and postal orders payable to Earth First! Remember security, false names and a collect or care of address are best.



If the circle is ticked your subscription has run out - renew it now!